



**SPRING BRANCH-MEMORIAL SPORTS ASSOCIATION  
Supplement Softball Playing Rules**

**Preface:**

The Board of Directors of the Spring Branch-Memorial Sports Association hereby empowers the Board of Girls Softball Commissioners to administer all phases of this program (that are not specifically reserved for the Board of Directors action) as outlined in these rules, or that are not in direct violation of said Association's by-laws. Within these limits the decisions of the majority of the Board of Girls Softball Commissioners will be official with 50% of the voting members of the Board present, one of which must be either the Director of Softball, or Assistant Director of Softball. An absent Board member's vote is counted as a yes unless the absent Board member specifically designates their vote as abstention.

Any rules not specifically noted will default to USA Softball Rules.

**I. General Rules.**

**A. Team Divisions.**

Divisions of teams, as approved by the Board of Softball Commissioners, shall be based on one or all of the following criteria:

1. Area skills draft. (10, 12, and 14 and under).
2. American and National League skills draft will be implemented for the 10U age division unless the Board determines there is not enough participation to split between the two leagues. Board will determine the number of AL teams prior to the draft if there is sufficient participation for an AL League. Should participation not be sufficient for two Leagues, the Age Level Commissioners along with the Softball Program Director will determine whether players will adhere to the NL or AL rules.

## **B. 10 & Under Draft.**

1. Once the skill evaluation has been completed, the coaches from a draft pool will meet with the age-level commissioner to conduct the draft. The blind drawing of numbers will determine the drafting order. Before beginning the draft, the commissioner will go over any special circumstances, requests, etc. involving specific players.
2. The AL draft will be conducted first and consist of 11 players per team. The number of teams will be decided by the Softball Board and the AL Coaches will be selected by the Softball Board. The AL Coaches will not elect an Assistant Coach.
3. The daughter of each coach is automatically placed on her father's (mother's) team.
4. NL Head Coaches are allowed to preselect one Assistant Coach prior to the Draft Day and their daughter will be protected in the draft assuming the age level commissioner or softball director has approved assistant coach pre-selection for that age level for the current season. The NL Draft Board will consist of the girls remaining available once the AL Draft has been completed.
5. The coaches will take turns drafting until all players have been selected utilizing a form (Snake or Serpentine) provided by the 10U Age Level Commissioner.
6. The coaches will then draft all players not present at skills evaluations unless the age level commissioner allows the player to be selected after providing information to the coaches. Otherwise, registered players who did not attend the Skills Assessment event will have their names printed on a slip of paper and placed into a "hat" and any coach may blindly select a slip of paper from the hat in any round of the draft when it is their turn, rather than selecting a player by name who did attend the Skills Assessment.
7. Once a player with a sibling or twin is drafted, the remaining sibling will be drafted in a round based on talent level. Talent level will be determined by a method decided by the Softball Program Director.
8. Trades will be allowed following the conclusion of the draft but no later than 30 minutes after the conclusion of the draft and must be approved by the Age Level Commissioner.
9. There will be no specific requirement to draft Pitchers or Catchers at any point in the Draft for AL or NL.

## **C. 12 & Under Draft.**

1. The draft will be split into (3) separate parts - if necessary, as determined by the Age Level Commissioner:
  - a. Pitchers Draft.

- b. Catchers Draft.
- c. General Draft.

If necessary, the pitchers and catchers draft will be an **AREA WIDE DRAFT** and will be held prior to the general draft.

2. Pitchers Draft (One Round).

- a. All players who either pitched last season, wish to pitch as evidenced by participation in the pitcher skills evaluation session, or is a known pitcher will be eligible for the pitcher draft and placed in the pitcher pool.
- b. Each coach must select (1) pitcher.
- c. The drafting order will be decided by a blind lottery drawing.
- d. A coach who has a daughter that pitches will not participate in the pitcher draft unless the daughter has decided not to pitch during the upcoming season and the coach will sign a statement to that fact. A coach's daughter who has not been declared a pitcher may not pitch until the 6<sup>th</sup> game of the regular season unless special permission has been granted by the Softball Program Director.

3. Catchers Draft (One Round) – (if necessary).

4. General Draft.

- a. Same rules and procedures as the pitcher's draft.
- b. The General Draft will follow the Pitcher and Catcher drafts and will include all the remaining players.
- c. Drafting order for the general draft will be decided by a blind draw, and then follow in order as per the attached sheet (serpentine).
- d. Siblings must be drafted together. If a coach selects a player who has a sibling that is also in the draft, then that sibling is automatically placed on the same team and will be drafted round based on talent level that will be determined by a method decided by the Softball Program Director.

- e. Trades will be allowed following the conclusion of the draft but no later than 30 minutes after the conclusion of the draft and must be approved by the Age Level Commissioner.
- f. Head Coaches are allowed to preselect one Assistant Coach and their daughter will be protected in the draft assuming the age level commissioner or softball director has approved assistant coach pre-selection for that age level for the current season.
- g. The commissioners will rule on any draft selection disputes and their decision is final.

**D. 14 & Under Draft.**

1. The draft will be held as soon as possible, following the completion of a skills evaluation sessions.
  - a. No player will be eligible for the draft pool unless she first attends a skills evaluation session.
  - b. Players who did not attend skills evaluations will be drafted blind.
  - c. The draft itself will be split into two (2) separate parts; a Pitchers Draft, followed by the General Draft.
2. Pitchers Draft – (as necessary).
  - a. All girls who either pitched last season or wish to pitch this season will be evaluated in a separate part of the skills evaluation session, in order to allow each coach an opportunity to evaluate the girl's pitching ability. If a girl pitched last year she is automatically in the pitcher's pool and must tryout. The Pitchers draft will be held first on draft night. Each team will take ONE TURN at drafting from the Pitchers Pool. Once every team has a pitcher, the remaining players in the Pitchers Pool will fall into the general draft pool and can be selected there.
  - b. The drafting order will be decided by a blind lottery drawing.
  - c. No coach's daughter will go into the Pitchers Pool. No coach with a daughter who pitches will be allowed to draft from the Pitchers Pool.
  - d. A coach, who has a daughter that pitches, and consequently is behind on the number of players after the first round, will be allowed an additional selection at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> round.
3. General Draft.
  - a. The General Draft will follow the Pitchers Draft, and include all remaining players, including those not taken in the Pitchers Draft.
  - b. The drafting order will be decided by a blind lottery drawing for the First Round. The remaining subsequent rounds will be drafted in serpentine order.

- c. Siblings must be drafted together. If a coach selects a player who has a sibling that is also in the draft, then that sibling is automatically placed on the same team, and the coach will lose a subsequent draft pick. It will be up to all the coaches and commissioner (of that age group) to mutually agree upon the difference in athletic ability of the two siblings, and make a decision before the draft commences, as to how many rounds a coach should be allowed to continue to draft in order, before a "skip" in the order is imposed.
- d. Trades will be allowed following the conclusion of the draft but no later than 30 minutes after the conclusion of the draft and must be approved by the Age Level Commissioner.
- e. Head Coaches are allowed to preselect one Assistant Coach and their daughter will be protected in the draft assuming the age level commissioner or softball director has approved assistant coach pre-selection for that age level for the current season.
- f. The commissioner will sit in on all drafts, and any rulings are FINAL on any draft selection disputes.

#### **E. Player Eligibility.**

1. Players shall be duly registered girls whose playing age is determined on January 1st of the current playing season. (Refer to the Registration Form for age groups).
2. Girls playing in the SBMSA softball league may participate on church or school sponsored teams and may participate during the season with other organized softball leagues.
3. Players must reside within the Spring Branch Independent School District, attend a SBISD school or attend a private school within the school district in order to participate in any of the programs. Bordering area players may, with Program Director approval, participate in SBMSA softball.
4. If a team uses an ineligible player, it should be reported to one of the commissioners. A committee of three commissioners shall be appointed by the Director of Softball to investigate, to hold a hearing at which all interested parties are afforded the opportunity to be present, and to render a decision. If the committee determines that an ineligible player was used, it may declare a forfeit, suspend the Manager, or take other appropriate action. Players Proof of age must be on file with SBMSA to be eligible.
5. If an AL team needs to pick up a player to have enough eligible players, they may pick up an NL player. If an NL team needs to pick up a player to have enough eligible players, they must pick up a player from the 8U Age Division.

**F. Fees.**

1. Fees as set by the Spring Branch-Memorial Sports Association are as follows. The fees as set apply to participation in girls' softball only. Registration fees are determined by cost of running the SBMSA softball program.
2. No girl shall be deprived of participation solely due to finances. If the Program Director is satisfied that a hardship exists, the girl will be allowed to play at no cost provided all necessary forms are completed and approved by the Director of Softball.

**G. Schedules.**

1. Schedules will be prepared by the Scheduling Commissioner for distribution to all teams.
2. It shall be the duty of the Manager of the home team to inform the Division Commissioner of the final score within 24 hours of completion of the game.

**H. Postponed Games.**

1. If, in the opinion of the Program Director, Umpire, or appropriate level Commissioner, a game cannot be played because of rain, wet fields, etc., the game will be postponed.
2. If a game is postponed, the manager shall notify the Age Level Commissioner of the postponement.
3. No manager can postpone any game for any reason without the consent of the Program Director or Age Level Commissioner. If a manager postpones a game without the appropriate approval, it will be considered a forfeit.
4. Every attempt will be made to reschedule a postponed game. If the Program Director determines the game cannot be played prior to the creation of the playoff schedule, the game will be scored a 1 to 1 tie. The Program Director has additional discretion to change this method should he/she deem one party is not fully cooperating with the process.

## **I. Practice Games.**

1. Team managers may schedule practice games with other teams if so desired. If the other team is not in our program, approval of the Program Director must be obtained. Protective headgear must be worn in practice games and at practice.

## **J. Equipment.**

1. Uniforms shall include a team jersey. At least a four-inch number is required on the back center in a visible position on the shirt. Shorts or full-length pants, tennis or rubber cleat shoes, and high-top socks are the responsibility of the player. The team manager will communicate any additional requirements.
2. Only official softball bats and balls, ASA approved (or USSSA), may be used in league games. All bat handles must be gripped. All ages must use chin strap on batting helmet. All players must use batting helmets with face guard as required by ASA as of 2005.
3. All Pitchers, 3<sup>rd</sup> base, and 1<sup>st</sup> base players must wear facemasks. It is strongly recommended that all infielders or all players wear facemasks, but not required.

## **K. Insurance.**

1. **SBMSA recommends that each player have some type of hospitalization or medical insurance coverage of their own.** If the player's parents choose not to have insurance coverage, it is assumed the parents do not consider it necessary or advisable to do so.

## **II. Playing Rules.**

All games shall be played according to the Official USA Softball Rule Book unless exceptions are noted in this book. If Spring Branch-Memorial Sports Association teams are permitted to play in a Co-op with other associations, the Co-op rules will have precedence over the following playing rules where a conflict exists.

### **A. Playing Fields.**

1. Distance between bases will be 60 feet.

2. The distance between the point of home plate and the front edge of the pitcher's plate shall be 43 feet for 14U, 40 feet for 12U games, and 35 feet for 10U games.
3. It is the Manager's responsibility to verify the proper marking of the distance between bases and the pitching distance prior to the start of any game. If a field is improperly marked and this is discovered while the game is in progress, the game shall be halted once the inning is completed, the field properly marked, and the game shall continue without loss of playing time. However, it is strongly recommended that these distances be verified prior to the game.
4. No field adjustments such as adding dirt to the pitching area from the dirt pile shall be allowed once the game has started except in the case of rain.

**B. Failure to Appear.**

1. Games will be forfeited if a team fails to appear on the field within 15 minutes of scheduled game time. If neither team appear a double forfeit shall be declared.

**C. Players and Substitutes.**

1. A team shall consist of nine (9) players, except for 10U NL teams where a tenth player is played as an extra outfielder. The 4<sup>th</sup> outfielder in NL must be located with both feet in the outfield grass until the ball is pitched. Unlimited substitution in the field is allowed except as limited by other rules. 10U AL will consist of nine (9) players.

**D. Length of Game.**

1. Regulation games: Games shall be six innings in length for all 10U, 12U, and 14U games, or when:
  - a. The home team has scored more runs in five innings than the visiting team has in six innings.
  - b. The home team scores the winning run in the sixth inning before the inning is complete.
  - c. The score is tied at the end of six innings, and one hour and ten minutes of playing time has elapsed.
  - d. If the time limit has not been reached in a tie game after the sixth inning, the teams may play until the time limit has elapsed. When time has elapsed, the teams will finish the inning in which they are in (not just finish the batter).
  - e. Terminated by umpire on account of weather, darkness, or other causes which make further play impossible or dangerous provided three or more innings have been played,

or the home team has scored more runs before the completion of the 3rd inning than the visiting team has scored in 3 innings.

- f. If a game is terminated by the umpire after three completed innings, the score of the game shall be the score at the end of the last complete inning. If, however, the home team shall have scored as many or more runs as the visiting team when the game is terminated while the home team is at bat, the score of such game shall be the total runs scored by each team. Also, when a game is terminated after three complete innings with the visiting team at bat and the home team ahead, the score shall be the total number of runs scored by each team at the end of the last completed inning.
- g. If time remains within the one hour and ten-minute limit, six innings have not been played, and the visiting team can score as many or more runs as the home team, a new inning will begin. The new inning will continue until the inning is finished or the visiting team fails to score enough runs to tie or go ahead.

## 2. Run Rule:

- a. A regulation game will be called when any team is ahead of their opponents by 11 runs or more after four innings or 6 runs or more after five innings. However, the game may continue as a “fun” game if time permits (regulation time minus 5 minutes) and the coaches agree, up to within 15 minutes of the next regular game’s starting time, not to exceed 10:00 p.m.

## 3. Runs Per Inning: (all teams except when Co-op rules take precedence)

- a. In addition to any other rules affecting the game, a team’s turn at bat, in any inning, shall terminate when such team scores a total of five (5) runs.
- b. For 10U NL, when the inning begins with a kid pitcher, the inning will terminate when such team scores a total of three (3) runs.
- c. Where the regulation time limit for a game expires during an inning, the inning shall continue only if the outcome of the game can be affected when applying this rule.

## 4. Regulation Time Limit:

- a. No inning shall start after one hour and ten minutes of playing time has elapsed from the start of the game. Loss of playing time due to injury, delay on account of rain, etc. shall not count in this noted time limit.

- b. If a game has continued for the regulation time limit from the start, it shall be a regulation game regardless of the number of innings played.
- c. In the event a game is terminated at any other time by an umpire other than as specified in Section 2.a. above, it shall not count as a regulation game and may be replayed or restarted from the point at which it was stopped. The determination of the point in which the game will be replayed from will be made by the Program Director. . The home team's "Book" should note the time the game ended and how much time is left in the game. It is also required that an umpire from that game sign or initial the physical book if kept, or note the time the Umpire in Charge, which is to be passed along to the Age Level Commissioner.

## **E. Pitching Regulations.**

### 1. General Regulations, all divisions:

- a. There shall be only two conferences between the manager or any other representative of the manager and the pitcher in an inning. The third conference shall result in the removal of the pitcher from the pitching position for the remainder of the inning.
- b. Illegal pitches will be called at the discretion of the umpire.
- c. Positioning of the pitcher's feet on the pitching rubber or any other regulation concerning pitching shall be determined according to the Official ASA Softball Rule Book.
- d. For 10U AL, 12U, and 14U only, there are unlimited walks.

### 2. 10U NL Pitching Regulations, Inning 1:

- a. For 10U NL, the first inning of the game will start with a player pitcher. The remaining innings will utilize a pitching machine. (See pitching machine rules in section 3).
- b. Off the player pitcher, there will be no steals, and no dropped third strike advancement. Runners can lead off once the player pitcher releases the ball.
- c. In the event a player is hit by a player pitcher in 10U NL, she will be awarded first base.

- d. A player pitcher can walk a maximum of two (2) batters in the first inning.
- e. After two walks, or two times the player pitcher hits a batter by pitch, or any combination of the two, in the event a player pitcher throws four balls to a subsequent batter, the batter will not be awarded a base. A coach pitcher will complete the at bat for the batter. Regardless of the count, the batter is allowed to be thrown a maximum of 3 pitches from the coach pitch. However, the number of swings a batter is allowed will depend on the number of strikes remaining. For example, if the player pitcher threw four consecutive balls, and the count is 4-0, the batter would receive a maximum of 3 pitches from the coach pitch and would have up to three swings to put the ball in play.. If the player pitcher threw ball four on a full count, 4-2, the batter would receive a maximum of 3 pitches from the coach pitch, but would only have one swing to put the ball in play.
- f. Foul balls count as swings off the coach pitcher. Example: Batter obtains 4 balls with 2 strikes. If the first pitch from the coach pitcher results in a swing and a miss, the batter is called out on strikes. In the same scenario, if the first pitch from the coach is fouled away, the coach pitch pitches again. If the second pitch is fouled away, the coach pitch pitches again. If the third pitch is fouled away, the batter is out because the maximum number of pitches a batter receives from the coach pitcher is three.
- g. Off of a coach pitcher, the batter cannot bunt.
- h. Off of a coach pitcher, the base runners can lead off.
- h. A team can only score a maximum of 3 runs off the combination of player pitcher and/or coach pitcher.
- i. Anytime a batter is hit by a pitch by a player pitcher the batter is rewarded first base, regardless of the number of walks or hit by pitch batters in the inning.
- j. The coach pitcher must leave the playing field as soon as the ball is put in play without interfering with the defending team. Any interference by the coach pitcher will be ruled obstruction and the batter runner will be declared out. The coach pitcher may NOT coach after the pitch is made, until the play is called dead. Doing so may result in the coach being ejected from the game.
- k. If a pitched ball hits the coach pitcher, the batter will not be declared out. Foul ball will be called and the batter will receive one more pitch, regardless of the existing pitch

count. If this happens on the 3<sup>rd</sup> pitch, the coach pitcher will be allowed to deliver one more pitch.

3. 10U NL Pitching Regulations, Inning 2 and beyond:

- a. For 10U NL, all innings after the first inning of the game will utilize a pitching machine.
- b. The pitching machine will be positioned at the pitcher's rubber position, 35 feet measured from the back of home plate. The pitching machine will be set to 38 mph.
- c. The pitching machine will be operated by the coach or asst coach of the batting team.
- d. If the coach operating the pitching machine provides any form of instruction or communicates with players or other coaches the coach will receive a warning from the umpire. If the pitching machine operating coach provides instruction or communicates with players or other coaches a second time a dead ball is called, the batter is out, and all baserunners return to their original base.
- e. Each team may adjust the pitching machine during the break between half-innings preceding their turn at-bat.
- f. If the coach operating the pitching machine adjusts the pitching machine while their team is at bat without the umpire's consent, they will receive a warning from the umpire. If the pitching machine operating non-manager coach adjusts the pitching machine while their team is at bat without the umpire's consent a second time a dead ball is called, the batter is out, and all baserunners return to their original base.
- g. The pitching machine may be adjusted at any other time at the umpire's discretion.
- h. The defensive player, who is the player pitcher must wear a helmet.
- i. The defensive player, who is the player pitcher will position herself to the right or left of the machine pitcher. The pitcher must start play with one foot on or in the rear one-half of the pitching circle and one foot outside the circle. The "player-pitcher" shall, for all intents and purposes of the other various rules governing 10U NL.
- j. Catchers and other fielders must throw the ball to the pitcher, not to the coach operating the pitching machine.

- k. Batted balls striking the pitching machine or umpire are considered dead balls. The hit is treated as a single. Runners do not advance to the next base unless forced to advance. Thrown balls striking the pitching machine or umpire/non-manager coach remain live balls.
- l. If a batted ball comes to rest within an unsafe proximity to the pitching machine as determined by the umpire, the ball will be declared dead, the batter will be awarded first base and no other runner shall advance unless forced. This includes batted balls that may have touched a fielder. If, in the judgment of the umpire, a fielder drops, kicks, rolls, pushes or in any manner purposely directs a batted ball into immediate vicinity of the pitching machine in an attempt to take advantage of this rule with a runner on base, the batter will be granted first base and all runners will advance one base with no liability to be put out.
- m. Off the machine, there will be no walks, no steals, and no dropped third strike advancement. Runners can lead off once the machine releases the ball.
- n. A batter hit by the machine pitcher will not be awarded first base.
- o. No bunting is permitted while the machine is pitching.
- p. During machine pitch all pitches produced by the machine count as a strike. Batters can strike out by looking or by swinging and missing during machine pitch. However, if the plate umpire determines the machine pitch is egregiously far from the batter's strike zone, the plate umpire will call the pitch a "no pitch". If an plate umpire calls a pitch a "no pitch" it will not count as a strike.
- q. Batters have unlimited foul balls off the machine.

**F. Coaches.**

The offensive team shall be allowed two coaches on the field, and they must remain in the coaches' boxes at all times.

- 1. Coaches must be Managers, Coaches, parents, or players.
- 2. One Defensive Manager may sit on a bucket outside of the dugout and his assistants are to remain in the dugout at all times unless the Manager is conferencing with the pitcher.

3. No more than four adults for each team may be within the playing field area at any time.
4. All adults other than the two coaches must remain within the confines of the dugout area. Only players on the team and coaches are allowed in the dugouts.
5. Only the manager or the manager designate will be permitted a conference with the umpire. The manager must be designated at the beginning of the game. However, in the event, for whatever reason, that a manager change is required during the game, the change must be reported to the umpire immediately.

#### **G. Mandatory Play.**

The Association is a developmental organization. The Association's aim is for each girl to participate in each game. An exception will be made in case a girl is ill or injured and unable to play, or being disciplined by her manager. In such case the opposing manager and official scorekeeper shall be notified prior to the start of the game, and the reason for the discipline stated in writing on the lineup sheet.

1. **Batting:** A team must bat its entire roster of all girls present consecutively in the order appearing on the lineup sheet submitted at the start of the game. Players arriving late must be added at the end of the lineup. If a player is unable to finish the game, her position in the batting order is passed over.
2. **Playing in the Field:** A player shall be played at least every other inning in the field at all age levels. In a 5-inning game every effort should be made to allow players to play in the field at least 3 innings.
3. **Penalty for Violation:** It shall be the duty of the Age Level Commissioner to see that the Mandatory Playing Rule is complied with. Periodic checks should be made to assure that this occurs.

This rule will be enforced by a standing Committee of three Commissioners - the Division Commissioner, the Director of Softball (who shall be Chairman) and one other Commissioner appointed by the Director of Softball (or by the Chairman in his/her absence).

**Violation of this rule shall result in the suspension of the manager for one or more games, and may result in a forfeit of the game against the offending team, at the discretion of the Committee. If the Committee determines that a Manager or person in charge willfully**

**violated this Rule, the penalty shall be automatic suspension for the remainder of the season, including playoff and post season games, in addition to other penalties, including forfeiture.**

Any violation should be reported to the Division Commissioner or Director of Softball by any interested person aware of such immediately.

#### **H. Player Limits.**

1. To start a regulation game, a team must field at least 8 players, not fewer than 6 of whom must be players on the team roster. No more than two players can be borrowed. Borrowed players cannot be used to build a team with more than 9 players. Borrowed players must play in the outfield and bat last.
2. If a team cannot field at least 6 of its own players at the start of the game, a forfeit game shall be declared.
3. If necessary to borrow players, they will be borrowed as follows:
  - a. If a team needs to borrow a player(s), they should be borrowed first from the 8U division for NL and from an NL team for AL.
  - b. Any borrowed player must meet the participation rule the same as other players on the team.
  - c. The borrowed player and her parents must agree to the conditions under which the player is borrowed.
  - d. If additional team members become available after the game starts, they must be added to the end of the batting order and the borrowed players may continue to play to the end of the game if they so desire.
  - e. If a forfeit game is declared because a team cannot field the required number of players at the outset, team members should be divided or borrowed in any manner possible to form two teams and a “fun” game played in lieu of a regulation game. Players must be registered girls.

- f. Borrowed players must wear their own team's uniform or regular clothing. Borrowed players cannot wear the uniform of the team they are being borrowed for.
  - g. Opposing Managers must be informed of the borrowed player(s) prior to the start of the game.
  - h. If any of the above rules concerning borrowed players are not followed, it will result in forfeiture.
4. **Playoff games or other post-season games may have special player borrowing limitations as designated by Softball Program Director at the beginning of or during the post-season.**

**I. Player Batting.**

- 1. Batter shall be declared out for a thrown bat.
  - a. Whether a bat was thrown or not shall be solely a decision of the umpire and is not subject to protest. The ball is dead. All baserunners must return to the base they originally occupied.
  - b. This rule is inserted to protect the players.
  - c. The player is out whether the bat was thrown on purpose or not.
- 2. Protective headgear must be worn when batting and running. ALL players must wear a face guard with batting helmet and all 10U players must have chin straps. USA Softball requires face guards with batting helmets.
- 3. A batter can run on the 3rd strike when the catcher drops the ball as provided in USA Softball rules 16U, 14U, 12U, and in 10U AL. 10U NL batters may not run after dropped 3rd strike.
- 4. The batter shall not hinder the catcher from fielding or throwing the ball by stepping out of the batter's box or intentionally hinder the catcher while standing in the batter's box.
- 5. The infield fly rule will be enforced except in 10U NL games.

6. A batter must bat at the position her number appears on the lineup and not by name. If a batter bats out of order, and the opposing manager calls it to the attention of the umpire and scorekeeper prior to the first pitch of the next batter, the out of order batter is out. If the ball was put into play any baserunners must return to their position on base, prior to the beginning of that at-bat. This includes any steal that may have taken place during the out of order at bat.
7. Bunting is allowed per USA Softball Rules except for when the machine pitcher is pitching or the coach is pitching (10U NL). Slashing (showing bunt and pulling back to swing) is not allowed in any 10U division and any player slashing will be out with a dead ball play.

**J. BASERUNNING (10U only).**

1. Stealing: Runners attempting to steal do so at the risk of being put out. In 10U NL, there will be no base stealing, however, players may leave the base and lead off when the ball is released from the pitcher (kid or coach) or when it exits the machine.
2. Stealing Home: Runners should make an effort to slide when stealing home.
3. Blocking/Interference: Defensive players may not block home plate if they do not have possession of the ball.
4. Leading Off: The runners can and should be taught to lead off and be aggressive doing so once the ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
5. Plays at the Plate:
  - a. Whenever a tag play is evident at the plate, runners must slide or seek to avoid contact with the fielder by avoiding the tag or returning to third base. The penalty for violation is that the runner shall be called out. When a runner is called out for not sliding or not seeking to avoid contact, the ball is still in play.
    - i. There is no requirement to slide at home plate every time. Rather, the requirement is to slide or avoid contact when a "tag play is evident" (i.e., when there is a close play at the plate). Whether "a tag play is evident" at home plate is a judgment call by the Umpires, and their judgment is final.
    - ii. Depending on where the tag play is at home, the runner must "slide" or "seek to avoid contact". On tag plays right at home plate, the runner must slide or be called

out. On tag plays at home where the runner is too far away to slide and reach home plate, he must seek to avoid contact with the fielder.

For instance, in the situation where a catcher has caught the ball 10 feet in front of home plate and is waiting to tag the runner, the runner cannot realistically be expected to slide because he is too far from the plate. However, the runner must “seek to avoid contact” with the catcher. Thus, the runner must try to run around the tag or run back to third base. In no event should the runner ever try to run over the fielder. The runner can and will be called out if he runs more than three feet away from the baseline in his effort to run around the tag.

- b. Malicious contact at the plate suspends all obstruction penalties. If there is malicious contact, the runner may be ejected from the game. These are judgment calls by the Umpires, and their judgment is final.
- c. Under no circumstances will head-first sliding be allowed at home base. If a runner slides head first at home base, she shall be called out. Note- a player tripping and falling forward head first is not considered a head first slide and will be at the sole judgment of the umpire.

#### **K. Instructions for Players.**

Prior to the start of the seasons and as a reminder throughout the season, coaches should give their players the following instructions:

1. Instruct girls to run across home plate but not over the catcher.
2. Instruct catcher not to block home plate.
3. The Catcher must wear a mask, shin guards, and a body protector at all times while catching.
4. Instruct the Manager, Coaches, and others to wear a mask while catching or umpiring behind the plate.
5. Instruct all players that league rules prohibit the wearing of any jewelry including pierced earrings during a game.

## **L. Appeals of Plays.**

USA Softball Rules will apply for all appeal plays., except as modified herein. **ONLY THE HEAD COACH, OR ASSISTANT IN THEIR ABSENCE, SHALL QUESTION OR PROTEST ANY RULING BY AN UMPIRE.** Any appeal is waived if not raised first by the Head Coach, or assistant in their absence, by calling time and approaching the umpire making the call.

## **M. Protests.**

- 1. Protests shall not be received or considered if they are based on a decision involving the accuracy of judgment on the part of an umpire.**
2. Protests shall be received and considered if they concern:
  - a. Misinterpretation of playing rules;
  - b. Failure of an umpire to apply the correct rule to a given situation; or
  - c. Failure to impose the correct penalty for a given violation.
3. Notification on intent to protest must be made prior to the next pitch.
  - a. The manager or responsible person of the protesting team must immediately notify the umpires, the opposing manager, and the scorekeeper that the game is being continued under protest.
  - b. All interested parties, including the scorekeeper, shall take notice of the conditions surrounding the making of the decisions that will aid in the correct determination of the issue.
  - c. The scorekeeper must note on the official score sheet that a protest was made and the score sheet must be given to the Director of Softball or their Age Level Commissioner immediately.
4. A protest in writing must be filed with the Age Level Commissioner within twenty-four hours after termination of play, and a copy emailed to the Director of Softball within twenty-four hours. The protest must contain the following information:
  - a. The decisions and conditions surrounding the making of the decision(s);

- b. all essential facts involved in the matter protested, including the inning, which team was at bat, the score, what player was batting, the count on the batter, what runners (if any) were on base and on which base, and the time elapsed since the start of the game;
  - c. the date, time and place of the game and names of the teams involved;
  - d. the names of the Umpires and Scorekeeper; and
  - e. the Rule and Section of the Official Rules, or of these Playing Rules under which the protest is being made.
5. The Age Level Commissioner shall deliver one copy of the protest to the opposing manager and one copy to the Age Level Commissioner without delay.
- a. The Director of Softball shall appoint a Committee of three Commissioners to hear the protest, two of whom shall be the Director of Softball (committee Chairman) and the Age Level Commissioner (providing there is not conflict of interest). The Chairman shall contact the opposing manager and request a written or oral report, and also a report from the scorekeeper and the umpires.
  - b. The Committee shall set a time and place for the hearing of the protest within two weeks of its filing, with both Managers being given the opportunity to be heard and to present their case. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Committee shall render a decision.
  - c. The Chairman shall notify both Managers of the decision within twenty-four hours if possible and forward a copy of the ruling to each in writing. Either Manager may appeal from the Committee to the Board of Commissioners by notifying the Chairman of his or her desire to appeal within twenty-four hours of receipt of the notice of the decision, stating the reason(s) for the appeal.
  - d. If no appeal is made within twenty-four hours, the decision of the Committee becomes final.
  - e. A copy of the protest, of the reply of the opposing Manager, the decision of the Committee on the protest, and of the appeal, if there be one, shall be filed with the Director of Softball.

## **N. Division Winners.**

Wins for the season count as 1 point and ties count as 0.5 points. The division winners are chosen based upon the total number of points. After considering points, a tie is broken by the team with the lesser amount of runs scored against for entire season. If a tie remains, a tie is then broken by the team with the most runs scored for entire season. If a tie still remains, each team involved in the tie is declared to be co-champion.

## **III. Code of Ethics.**

### **A. General.**

It shall be considered improper and inconsistent with honorable and dignified bearing on any commissioner, manager, umpire, coach, parent, or player:

1. To conduct himself or herself in any unsportsmanlike manner on or near any practice or playing field.
2. To enter a practice or playing field while intoxicated, or to indulge in the use of intoxicating beverages or tobacco products on or near practice or playing fields, or to be under the influence of intoxicating beverages or drugs while on the field.
3. To use obscene or abusive language at practice or during games.
4. To conduct himself or herself in any other manner that could be considered detrimental to the Softball Program and not in the best interests of the Sports Association.
5. To harass, insult or downgrade any opposing players, team, coaches, umpires, etc.
6. To start fights or participate in fights amongst managers, coaches, parents, umpires, or players.

**Treat these as commandments. Anyone violating any of the above rules of ethics, even on a single occasion, shall be subject to expulsion and removal from the practice or playing field and/or his or her position in the program.**

### **B. Rules of Conduct.**

The policy of the SBMSA Board is that the Girls Softball Program be conducted and carried out by all participants in a competitive but sporting manner. It is expected that all involved will treat each other with courtesy and respect, and that players, coaches, parents, and spectators should always control their emotions. This requires all adults involved to set a good example so that the players may learn to accept both victory and defeat in a fair and responsible way.

One of the primary goals of the SBMSA is to teach Good Sportsmanship to our area youth. Displays of poor sportsmanship by players, coaches, parents, and / or spectators will not be tolerated. As a discouragement of such displays, the SBMSA Executive Board mandates a one game suspension for any player or coach ejected from a game by a game official based on poor sportsmanship or any parent or spectator removed from a game by a game official based on poor sportsmanship. This suspension shall be administered by the Softball Director and the Softball Board. While the one game suspension is mandated, the Softball Director and the Softball Board may for particularly outrageous behavior or recurring incidents, levy suspensions of additional games up to and including the remainder of a season or future seasons. The decision of the Softball Director and the Softball Board shall be final and not subject to an appeal.

#### **IV. Sportsmanship Committee.**

SBMSA Board of Directors has created a formal Sportsmanship Committee to assist each sport Program Director/Board on serious or recurrent sportsmanship violations by any coach, parent, player, or fan. The Sportsmanship committee is charged to formalize and mandate, through consistent and reportable actions, that Sportsmanship is a core value of SBMSA. That includes better tracking of individuals who display repeated lapses of good sportsmanship and/or conduct across multiple SBMSA program venues. This committee will be led by the Sportsmanship Director and each sport will appoint a representative to serve on this committee. At his/her sole discretion, the Sportsmanship Director may appoint additional individuals to serve of this committee.

This committee brings consistency and accountability to the coach selection process between the sport programs and provides a mechanism to permanently remove coaches for repeat lapses in sportsmanship and/or indifference in providing positive coaching and mentoring leadership to our youth athletes. This committee can also be engaged to address issues outside of actions by game officials where a coach/parent/athlete/fan merits disciplinary discussion for repetitive or very serious sportsmanship violations and/or has been previously suspended for conduct detrimental to league core values. Program Directors can request any serious sportsmanship violation by a coach, player, parent, or fan etc. be referred to the Sportsmanship Committee. Any recommendations by the Sportsmanship Committee will handed to the sports Program

Director/Board for final action and are not subject to an appeal. Unless otherwise communicated by Program Director, any matter forwarded to the Sportsmanship Committee will be considered an immediate and indefinite suspension until Sportsmanship Committee hands final recommendation to sports Program Director/Board for final action.

**V. Field Decorum.**

1. The team manager will be solely responsible for the conduct of his/her team and its followers. In his/her absence the designated team manager shall assume that responsibility. Only the responsible person shall question or protest any ruling by the umpire.
2. At no time shall any team manager, coach, parent, or player harass or make disparaging or insulting remarks to or about any players, officials, or spectators.
3. Each team is responsible for placing water and cups in their own dugout. The team manager is responsible for policing the dugout for trash, etc. after each game.
4. After the last game is played for the day on the field, the team manager is responsible not only for policing the dugout area, but also depositing trash from his/her dugout or on the field in the trash receptacles or dumpster.
5. The use of any tobacco products is not allowed in the dugout or on the playing field.
6. Steel cleats are prohibited for managers, coaches or players. Penalty for violation of rule 2 above is prompt removal of the offender from the game and grounds. For the first offense, managers or coaches may be warned, but for a second offense, they are removed from the game, and shall leave the grounds immediately. Failure to do so will warrant forfeiture of the game.

**Any violations of the Code of Ethics shall subject the offender to possible expulsion and removal from his or her position in the program.**

**REMEMBER!**

**PLAY HARD BUT PLAY FAIR.**

**REMEMBER IT IS A FUN PROGRAM.**

**IF YOU TAKE THE FUN OUT OF PLAYING, THERE IS NOTHING LEFT.**

**Sportsmanship is mandatory at all times.**

**VI. Miscellaneous.**

The rainout number for SBMSA is 281-583-3600.

Coaches must make sure dug outs are clear of trash and litter after each game. Make sure your team and fans know they should clean up after themselves. Home teams put out bases first game and put away bases last game. Make sure equipment room is locked at all times. Visiting teams turn on lights first game and turn off lights last game. Lock up gate to light switch cage. Coaches rake fields before/after games as needed.

Home teams report scores to Age Level commissioners.